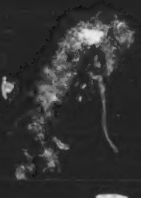
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Small Business Roundtable

Small Business Roundtable

Report to Government

"Making British Columbia the most small business friendly jurisdiction in Canada"



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Executive Summary

Under the leadership of Premier Gordon Campbell, the Small Business Roundtable was established in October 2005, to provide small business with a voice in government. The twenty five Roundtable members are small business leaders from across British Columbia. The Roundtable's mandate is to engage in a dialogue with small business to identify key issues and opportunities, and develop recommendations to small business and government on strategies to enhance small business growth and success.

This report outlines the consultations and activities of the Roundtable since October 2005. It summarizes the results of the public consultation and small business survey. Based on key opportunities and issues identified by small business owners through the consultation and survey, the report provides recommendations to government and the small business sector on ways to enhance the small business environment in British Columbia.

The Roundtable makes recommendations, and suggests possible actions, for small business owners to address the following issues:

- Recruitment and retention of staff
- Clarity of PST obligations
- Regulatory burden

The Roundtable recommends the government focus its small business strategy in the following areas:

- Support actions to improve small business access to labour; trades development and training; and, business, trades and entrepreneurship education for youth
- Reduce tax complexity and develop more streamlined administrative processes
- Regulatory reform to reduce regulatory burden for small business

Finally, the report outlines the objectives and commitments of the Roundtable for the second year of its operations.

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Source for Marginal Notes:

Small Business Profile 2006: A Profile of Small Business in British Columbia
BC Stats Services

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Purpose of the Report

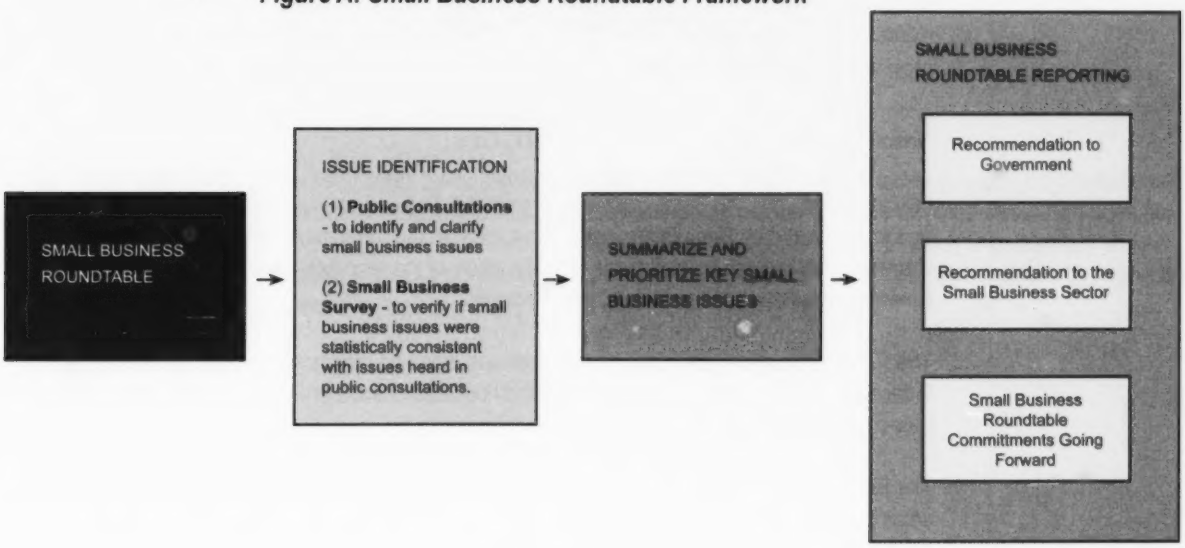
In April 2005, Premier Gordon Campbell announced the Five Great Goals for the golden decade ahead, which include the goal of creating more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada. To facilitate this goal, the permanent Small Business Roundtable (Roundtable) was established in October 2005. The Roundtable was created in recognition of the significant contribution of small business to the province's economy, and is part of the government's commitment to the small business community.

The Roundtable's mandate is to engage in a dialogue with small business to identify key issues and opportunities, and develop recommendations to government and small business on strategies to enhance small business growth and success. Small business is defined as any business with less than 50 employees.

This Small Business Roundtable Report summarizes the activities undertaken by the Roundtable to fulfil its mandate during its first year. It provides an overview of the Roundtable, its mandate and objectives, and outlines the consultation processes and results.

This report sets out the Roundtable's recommendations to the small business sector and government on potential strategies that would assist in strengthening British Columbia's small business environment. Finally, the report sets out the Roundtable's activities for the coming year.

Figure A: Small Business Roundtable Framework


SMALL BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE
ISSUE IDENTIFICATION
(1) Public Consultations - to identify and clarify small business issues
(2) Small Business Survey - to verify if small business issues were statistically consistent with issues heard in public consultations.
SUMMARIZE AND PRIORITIZE KEY SMALL BUSINESS ISSUES
SMALL BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE REPORTING
Recommendation to Government
Recommendation to the Small Business Sector
Small Business Roundtable Committments Going Forward

Terms of Reference

The mandate of the Small Business Roundtable is to provide advice to government and the small business sector on issues, strategies and potential actions to support British Columbia in becoming the most small business friendly jurisdiction in Canada.

Roundtable commitments include:

- Consulting with the small business community to identify and prioritize, in a timely manner, the key opportunities and issues facing small business in British Columbia.
- Recommending strategies to the small business sector to address small business challenges and to contribute to small business growth and success.
- Recommending specific strategies to government to enhance the small business environment in British Columbia.
- Identifying and undertaking selected initiatives to enhance the competitiveness of the small business sector.

Small business employment in British Columbia grew 3.8 percent between 2004 and 2005 – the highest rate of growth among the provinces and well above the national average of 0.9 percent.

Small Business Roundtable Members

The permanent Small Business Roundtable is chaired by the Honourable Rick Thorpe, Minister of Small Business and Revenue and Minister Responsible for Regulatory Reform. The vice-chairs are Kevin Evans, Vice President, Western Canada, Retail Council of Canada and Linda Larson, former Mayor of Oliver.

Including the chair and vice-chairs, there are 25 Roundtable members representing various regions, industries, associations and small businesses throughout British Columbia. Small Business Roundtable members were selected for their leadership and ability to bring diverse viewpoints to provincial small business issues. A list of Roundtable members is provided in Appendix A.

Small Business Roundtable Activities

During its first year, the Small Business Roundtable focused on identification of small business opportunities and challenges through consultation processes outlined in this report. The key issues identified during these consultations form the basis of the recommendations in this report. Small Business milestones are provided in Appendix B.

The Roundtable also developed a small business lens and recommends the lens be used by provincial, federal and local governments to ensure small business issues are fully considered when introducing new or amended legislation and regulations (Appendix G).

The Roundtable has taken an active role in supporting Junior Achievement BC (JABC) in developing small business and entrepreneurial skills among our youth, and promoting small business as a viable career alternative. A member of the Roundtable serves on the JABC Board of Directors, and the Roundtable provides ongoing advice to JABC in the development and expansion of its programs in British Columbia.

The small business count in the province expanded by an average of 4,880 per year in the last five years (2000 to 2005), which makes for an average annual growth rate of 7.2 percent

Consultation Process

From November 2005 through May 2006, the Roundtable undertook a series of consultations aimed at engaging small business owners and industry representatives throughout British Columbia in a conversation to identify key opportunities and issues for small business.

Each Roundtable consultation was chaired by the Minister of Small Business and Revenue, and attended by at least one Roundtable member and generally one or more local MLA. Consultation participants were nominated by local business organizations and associations, Roundtable members and MLA, as well as inviting public participation through local newspaper advertisements.

Consultations took place in 18 communities in all regions of the province. The 228 small business owners who participated represented a wide range of sectors, including agriculture, construction, retail, hospitality and more. Details on the consultation process are provided in Appendix C.

Consultation Findings

A number of the opportunities and issues raised during the consultations were specific to particular regions, such as providing a northern living allowance or Translink impacts on small businesses in Vancouver. Others were consistently raised throughout the consultation process, such as regulatory burden, complexity of the provincial sales tax (PST), recruitment and retention of skilled labour, and access to financing.

Opportunities and issues discussed during the consultations were grouped into four general themes:

1. Human Resources and Education
2. Regulatory Reform and a Competitive Tax Structure
3. Economic Growth
4. Small Business Issues

The summaries below highlight issues and opportunities raised during at least 10 consultations in different locations. It is important to note that the number of times an issue was raised does not necessarily mean it is more important. It simply reflects that it is an issue or opportunity shared by small business owners across the province. Key issues and opportunities raised by region are provided in Appendix D.

Human Resources and Education

Recruitment and retention of skilled labour was a major issue raised at each consultation. One of the biggest challenges in the construction industry is finding the necessary trades-people for the numerous projects underway in the province. In the North, many small businesses invest time and money to develop apprentices, only to lose them upon certification to higher-paying jobs in larger companies, or to urban centres. Smaller retail outlets are having difficulty attracting employees to lower-wage positions.

Promotion of entrepreneurship and careers in skilled trades in grades K-12 is seen as an important means of addressing the province's skilled labour supply and expanding the small business sector. Key to the future of the province is partnerships between the education system and the business community to support co-operative education, apprenticeship, and entrepreneurship programs.

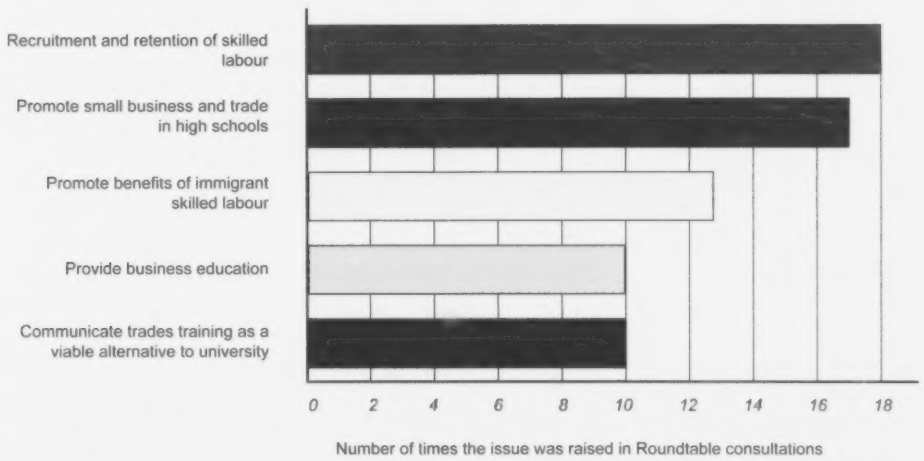
On average, small businesses have traditionally paid their employees lower wages compared to larger businesses. In 2005, the average small business employee earned $33,078, compared to $39,788 for employees of large businesses, which amounts to a difference of nearly $7,000 annually.

Small Business owners stress the importance of promoting careers in small business and trades in high schools as an alternative to a University education. There remains a perception that careers in trades do not offer the same challenges and financial benefits as careers requiring a university education. There is not enough communication or promotion of the increasing number of females entering trades, increasing wage levels, and the exciting challenges created by technological advancement in the trades.

To address the province's labour issues, small business owners advocate changes to immigration processes to make it easier for skilled immigrants to work in the province. There is a general perception that immigrant labour currently residing in the province is under-utilized due to accreditation barriers.

British Columbia had a record number of small businesses opening in 2005 (29,887). However, small business owners have a need for educational support, particularly in marketing and succession planning. Many new small business operators do not have the knowledge to market their goods and services internationally.

Figure B: Human Resources and Education



Regulatory Reform and a Competitive Tax Structure

The overall tax and regulatory burden placed on small business by provincial, federal, and local governments was a major issue raised at each consultation. Many small business owners feel too much time is spent on unnecessary regulatory 'paperwork', which negatively affects the time they can devote to their business. The process of obtaining the appropriate permits and licences can be both costly and time-consuming for the small business owner.

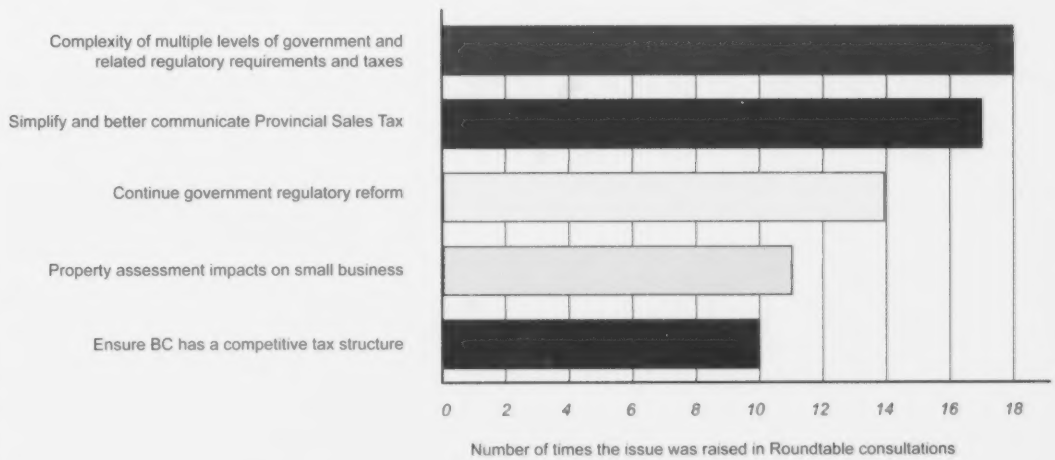
It is recognized the province has made significant progress in regulatory reform by reducing regulatory requirements by 41.06 percent since June 2001. However, small business has not felt a large impact from these regulatory reductions. Government needs to continue to reduce the regulatory burden on small business owners.

Small businesses comprised approximately 95 percent of employers in high technology, the fastest growing sector in new small businesses.

A major challenge for small business owners is the complexity of the provincial sales tax (PST). There is a need for clearer, simpler guidelines on what is and is not taxable, and more flexibility with PST remittance policies. Harmonization of the PST with the federal government's goods and services tax was frequently suggested as a way to reduce the complexity for business. This would allow businesses to deal with only one tax base and remittance process. Given our proximity to Alberta, small business owners stressed the importance of a competitive tax structure for British Columbia.

Property tax and the assessment process were also key issues for small businesses. The main concern is the relatively high taxes paid by businesses in certain municipalities and jurisdictions, especially in relation to residential property tax rates. Small business owners suggest they should have greater influence over how much property tax their businesses pay.

Figure C: Regulatory Reform and Competitive Tax Structure



Economic Growth

The 2010 Olympic & Paralympic Winter Games provide a unique opportunity for British Columbia to market itself to the world as an ideal place to visit, live and invest. Promotion of the province should include locations outside Vancouver and Victoria. To take advantage of this opportunity, small businesses must be prepared to deliver goods and services to tourists with limited English-speaking ability. Small businesses should become aware of, and position themselves to take advantage of, the opportunities presented by the numerous large events leading up to the 2010 Olympics.

Regional differences offer a range of tourist attractions that should be included in the promotion of British Columbia as a tourism destination. Adventure and agro-tourism are growth industries only available in particular locations in the province. The unique, pristine landscape of the North has attractions for the film industry. The North is also a conduit for tourists travelling to and from Alaska.

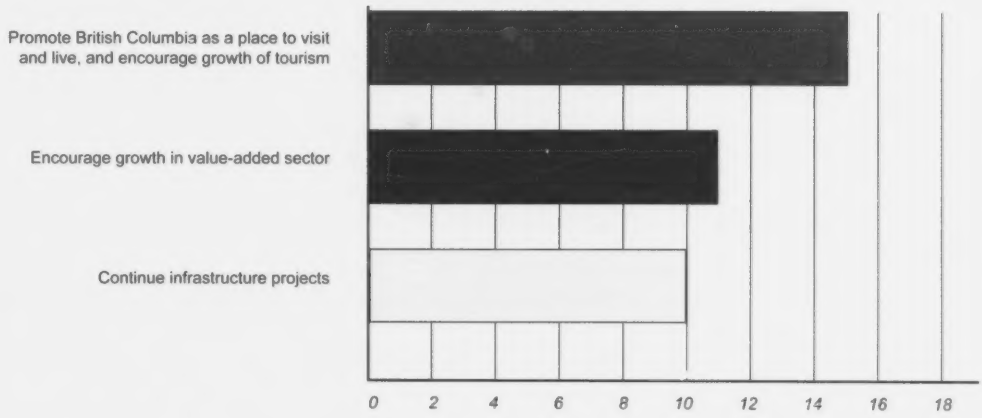
The Northeast region recorded the highest rate of growth in the province in the number of new small businesses, with an average increase of 3.8 percent per year over the 2000 to 2005 period.

British Columbia has natural advantages that provide unique products to the marketplace. Excess wood from the pine beetle infestation has created growth opportunities for value-added wood products. Opportunities also exist to expand into specialist markets, such as wine from the Okanagan region and chanterelle mushrooms on Vancouver Island. British Columbia First Nation's art is world-renowned.

Branding British Columbia products would provide marketing advantages in secondary markets outside the province. Given the marketing opportunities on the Internet, there are tremendous opportunities for British Columbia small businesses to expand their consumer bases to include broader domestic and international markets.

Support is consistent for continued infrastructure improvement projects throughout the province. These infrastructure projects, particularly in the Interior, create jobs and generate small business opportunities for entrepreneurs.

Figure D: Economic Growth



Small Business Issues

Difficulty accessing financing can be an issue for small business in both the start-up and growth phases. There is a perception that financial institutions are averse to extending credit to small businesses, even where such businesses have a long history of success. Many new entrepreneurs may not have the expertise to develop business plans that can assist in supporting their requests for financing with financial institutions.

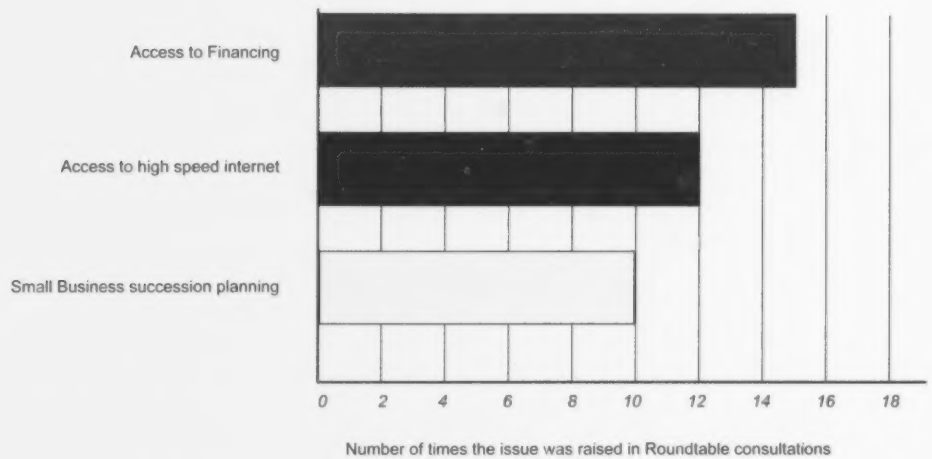
Business succession is of particular concern to traditional, family-run businesses. There is a growing trend among children of small business owners to pursue careers outside of the family business. This is of particular concern to ranchers and farmers. Given the labour-intensive nature of the work, the experience required, and the relatively low margins, many of these small businesses may cease to operate once the small business owner retires. Similar trends are occurring with respect to family owned businesses in other sectors.

The gap between annual earnings of employees of small and large businesses narrowed significantly in 2005, but remains substantial at almost $7,000.

There is a direct relationship between access to financing and business succession. Access to venture and development capital is a concern for small business. Given the difficulties in obtaining financing, current small business owners may find it difficult to attract buyers upon their retirement. Small business owners need to develop succession plans long before retirement to ensure they reap the benefits of their years of hard work.

Access to high-speed Internet is an issue for both rural areas and communities on the outskirts of relatively large urban areas. Small business supports the government's program for expanding high-speed broadband access. Small business also cautions government that its increasing use of Internet to provide services can create difficulties for many small business owners. Particularly in the forestry sector, the necessity to conduct large volumes of business electronically requires allocation of significant resources to service providers and technical consultants.

Figure E: Small Business Issues



Summary of Most Common Issues Raised in Consultations

Human Resource and Education

- Recruitment and retention of skilled labour (18)*
- Promote small business and trades in high schools (17)
- Promote benefits of immigrant skilled labour (13)
- Provide business education to small business operators (10)
- Communicate trades training as a viable alternative to a university education (10)

Regulatory Reform and a Competitive Tax Structure

- Complexity of regulatory and tax requirements of provincial, federal and local governments (18)
- Simplify and better communicate the Provincial Sales Tax (17)
- Continue government regulatory reform (14)
- Consider Property Assessment impacts on small business (11)
- Ensure British Columbia continues to lead and have a competitive tax structure (10)

Economic Growth

- Promote British Columbia as a place to visit, live and encourage growth of tourism (15)
- Encourage growth in value-added sector (11)
- Continue infrastructure projects (10)

Small Business Issues

- Access to financing (15)
- Access to high speed Internet (11)
- Business succession planning (10)

** Denotes the number of consultations the issue was raised*

Survey Process

The Roundtable contracted a market research firm, Malatest and Associates Ltd., to conduct a survey of small business owners. The objective of the survey was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions small business owners have of the business climate in the province, and to identify key opportunities and issues for small business owners.

A total of 1,104 small business operators from all regions in the province responded to the online and telephone surveys. Given the significant participation and the rigorous statistical techniques in this survey, the results can be viewed with considerable confidence. Details of the survey process are provided in Appendix E.

The majority of small businesses in British Columbia are micro-businesses with fewer than five employees. In 2005, there were 303,700 businesses of this description, comprising nearly 84 percent of all small businesses.

Key Findings

The survey indicates almost two-thirds of small business owners believe the overall business climate in British Columbia is better now than it was five years ago.

The overall tax burden (all government levels) and the ability to find labour were reported as the biggest challenges facing small business.

The survey identified three areas that should be key priorities for the government:

- Changes to the provincial tax structure
- Reduction of red tape for small business owners
- Access to labour

The tax structure for small business

Almost two-thirds of respondents in each region indicate changes to the provincial tax structure should be a medium or high priority for government. In addition, more than one-half (52 percent) of employers recommend changes to small business taxation as the most critical factor for improving the small business climate in British Columbia.

Regulatory burden on small business owners

While the provincial government has made progress in regulatory reform, only 15 percent of small business owners indicate there has been a reduction in "red-tape." However, there are significant regional differences. Almost 25 percent of small business owners in Victoria and the Capital Region agree there has been a reduction, while only 5 percent of businesses in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region agree.

Provincial shortage of labour

Employers throughout British Columbia, and especially in the Northern and Interior regions, report the major challenge facing their business is the inability to find suitable labour. More than three-quarters of employers surveyed indicate it is very important for the province to promote skills and trades training to youth as an alternative to university education. More than 20 percent of respondents cite this as one of the top three ways in which the business climate can be improved for small business owners in British Columbia.

Conclusions

The small business community is not a homogenous group. Small business owners in more "urban" areas (Vancouver/Victoria/Thompson-Okanagan) voiced different opinions than did owners in other regions of the province. Small business owners in more urban regions are more concerned with regulatory issues; those in more rural regions are more concerned about labour supply issues. A summary of regional results is provided in Appendix F.

Not surprisingly, survey respondents who employ between 20 and 49 employees are more concerned about labour supply issues than are small business owners who employ fewer than five employees. For example, almost all owners (86 percent) who employ more than 20 employees identify better access to skilled labour as a medium or high priority for government. Only 74 percent of business owners with fewer than five employees share this view.

Overall, the results of the survey are consistent with the results of the Small Business Roundtable consultations. The survey and consultations provide clear direction for government and small business in developing strategies to enhance small business growth and success in British Columbia.

Summary of Issues Raised in the Small Business Survey

Main Issues

- Review and modify the tax structure for small business
- Keeping up with regulations/paperwork
- Work force training and supply issues

Other Issues of Concern

- Securing financing for growth or expansion
- Securing insurance for operations
- Obtaining permits
- Promoting workforce training to traditionally underemployed groups
- Promoting skills and trades training as an alternative to university education
- Providing incentives to encourage employers to provide training
- Evaluating how business property assessments are calculated
- Evaluating the balance between business and residential taxes
- Enhancing tax credits for training
- Changing accounting rules for capital equipment so that assets are depreciated at a faster rate

What We Heard

The consultations and small business survey made it clear that small business owners are generally enthusiastic and positive about the business climate in British Columbia. In almost every community, we heard small business is thriving and tremendous opportunities exist for continued growth. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to address as we learn to manage success.

British Columbia small businesses have diverse needs, which vary with the size and location of their businesses. The Roundtable's recommendations to government and the small business sector reflect this diversity.

On average, the self-employed tend to be older, are more often men and work longer hours compared to those who work as paid employees.

In our view, government and the small business sector should focus their efforts on developing strategies to address the following major issues.

Access to Skilled Labour

Opportunities and Issues raised in consultations:

- Recruitment and retention of skilled labour
- Promote small business and trades in high schools
- Promote benefits of immigrant skilled labour
- Provide business education to small business operators
- Communicate trades training as a viable alternative to university education

Opportunities and Issues raised in survey:

- Finding skilled labour
- Promoting workforce training to traditionally underemployed groups
- Promoting skills and trades training as an alternative to university education
- Providing incentives to encourage employers to provide training
- Enhancing tax credits for assessment and training

Reducing Regulatory Burden for Small Business

Opportunities and Issues raised in consultations:

- Complexity of regulatory and tax requirements of provincial, federal and local governments
- Continue government regulatory reform

Opportunities and Issues raised in survey:

- Keeping up with the regulatory and business paperwork
- Simplify obtaining licences and permits

Simplification of Provincial Sales Tax for Small Business

Opportunities and Issues raised in consultations:

- Simplify and better communicate the Provincial Sales Tax
- Consider Property Assessment impacts on small business
- Ensure British Columbia continues to lead and have a competitive tax structure

Opportunities and Issues raised in survey:

- Overall tax burden
- Simplify the provincial sales tax
- Evaluate how business property assessments are calculated
- Evaluate the balance between business and residential taxes
- Enhance tax credits for assessment and training
- Change tax policy so capital equipment assets are depreciated at a faster rate

In British Columbia, 35 percent of the self-employed are women, which is higher than the national average of just under 34 percent.

Current Government Initiatives

It is important to note that, as the Roundtable explored the opportunities in more detail, it became evident considerable effort is already underway across government and the small business sector to address a large number of these opportunities and issues. The Roundtable was pleased to see several of these opportunities and issues addressed in the 2006 Budget (see Appendix H). However, based on the Roundtable findings, there is clearly more that can be done to enhance the small business climate in British Columbia.

Recommendations to the Small Business Sector

Based on what was identified during the consultations and small business survey, the Roundtable recommends to the small business sector the following actions under three main themes:

- Invest in the recruitment and retention of staff
- Clarify PST obligations
- Regulatory simplification

Invest in Recruitment and Retention of Staff

Small business in British Columbia shipped almost $11.5 billion worth of merchandise to international destinations in 2004, more than a third of the total value of goods exported from the province.

- Broaden potential employee candidates to include under-represented groups (i.e. aboriginal, lower-income, persons with disabilities, retirees, etc.).
- Attract and retain employees through a variety of incentives, such as flexible work arrangements, training and growth opportunities, incentive bonuses and profit sharing.
- Use co-operative education programs with high schools and local colleges.
- Provide volunteer opportunities to expose youth to the benefits of working in the small business sector.
- Support local schools and programs (such as Junior Achievement) with your business expertise to enhance the career exposure for elementary and secondary students in the areas of business, trades and entrepreneurship.

Clarify PST Obligations

- Attend a PST and/or GST seminar to ensure you are fully aware of your responsibilities under the legislation, and that you are accurately collecting and remitting tax.
- Read tax information sent to you by the government.
- Become familiar with the Taxpayer Fairness and Service Code, produced by the Ministry of Small Business and Revenue, which outlines your rights as a tax collector and taxpayer and tells you where to get answers to your tax questions.

Regulatory Simplification

- Use websites and services, such as Small Business BC, Industry Canada Business Services and One Stop Business Registry, to assist in setting up your business.
- Use Front Counter BC to obtain information on establishing a resource-based business.
- Use BizPaL (as available) to assist in identifying the licences and permits required for your business.
- Learn which government organizations and online tools are available to provide information specific to your business.

Recommendations to Government

Based on what was identified during the consultations and small business survey, the Roundtable recommends to government the following actions under three main themes.

- Support human resources access, development, and education
- Reduce regulatory burden for small business
- Reduce tax complexity for small business

Support Human Resource Access, Development, Education

Access to Labour

In 2005, there were 59,200 more self-employed workers in British Columbia compared to 2000, a 16.6 percent increase over the five-year period.

- Accelerate the process for developing a long term focused and comprehensive provincial labour supply strategy.
- Take immediate action to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the Provincial Nominee Program and ensure it is accessible to the small business community.
- Work with professional associations, the federal government and other provinces to streamline the accreditation process for those who obtain their certification outside British Columbia.
- Develop a Human Resource Best Practices Guide for small businesses to learn how to effectively recruit and retain staff.

Trades Development and Training

- Provide training tax credits to small businesses to encourage employers to train and develop their employees.
- Work with the Industry Trade Association to attract private sector investment in private-public partner ships for trades training facilities.
- Encourage online trades training programs for rural communities with limited access to available schools.
- Promote business education courses throughout the province leveraging partnerships with Small Business BC.

Business, Trades and Entrepreneurship Education for Youth

- Broaden the career exposure for elementary and secondary students to include business, trades and entrepreneurship with programs such as Ace-it and Junior Achievement British Columbia.
- Communicate to high school counsellors and parents the benefits of careers in the technical field.
- Market the benefits of a trades career as a viable alternative to a university education.

Reduce Regulatory Burden for Small Business

- Implement the Small Business Lens in developing new provincial, federal and local government policy, regulation, legislation or programs (see Appendix G).
- Promote and drive the adoption of the Government of British Columbia approach to regulatory reform at both the federal and local government level.
- Identify and focus the regulatory reform agenda on issues that are a considerable burden to small business.
- Work with the federal and local governments to implement BizPaL province wide.

Reduce Tax Complexity for Small Business

- Simplify the PST for small business. Consider extending tax-filing timelines, and reducing or clarifying exemptions.
- Ensure plain language communication with small business, and ensure results of the PST Review are broadly communicated so they reach all small businesses in the province. The purpose of the review was to consult with small business, industry and individual British Columbians on ways the provincial sales tax could be improved.
- Work with BC Assessment to review property assessment impacts on small business and engage small business in discussions and reviews of property assessment policies and legislation.
- Ensure British Columbia has a competitive and fair tax structure for small business, at all levels of government.

British Columbia leads the nation in self-employment growth. Between 2000 and 2005, there was a 16.6 percent increase in the number of self-employed in the province, compared to a national average of -0.2 percent.

Roundtable Commitments Going Forward

The Small Business Roundtable will continue to champion issues, opportunities and activities supporting small business growth by advising government on actions to enhance the small business environment. For the upcoming year, the Roundtable will develop an action plan to put into effect the following commitments.

In the high technology sector, small businesses comprise 97 percent of employers. The basis for growth in this sector is innovation, and services that can be performed from small plants with few employees, small offices and even homes.

Support Human Resource Access, Development, Education

- Encourage the development of a long term labour supply strategy for British Columbia.
- Champion increasing labour supply through employment of under represented groups, such as First Nations, persons with disabilities, new immigrants, and mature workers.
- Support the expansion of Junior Achievement British Columbia by encouraging business participation in Junior Achievement and other elementary and secondary school business programs.

Support Regulatory Reform

- Further investigate regulatory obstacles for small business and develop related recommendations.
- Champion the adoption of Small Business Lens by provincial, federal and local governments when developing new government policy, regulation, legislation or programs (see Appendix G).
- Encourage municipal governments to participate in BizPal.
- Champion Regulatory Reform to municipalities and encourage the use of common business licences for neighbouring municipalities.

Enhance Small Business Resources and Support

- Provide advice to Small Business BC to ensure services meet the needs of small business in British Columbia.
- Communicate with small business on the opportunities available and actions they can take to enhance their small business environment.

Continue Dialogue with Small Business Community

- Undertake further consultations with small business to monitor and report on success of small business and government initiatives and develop recommendations for the small business community and the government on strategies to address opportunities and challenges over the coming years.
- Work with the small business community to identify opportunities for partnership undertakings that can contribute to small business success throughout the province.

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Appendix A — Small Business Roundtable Members by Region

Vancouver Island / Coast

- **David Littlejohn**, Professional Campground Operator, Living Forest Ocean Campground
- **Cindy Poulin**, Accountant at Chan Sterling & Company
- **J. Murray Presley**, Managing Partner, Presley & Partners Chartered Accountants and Councillor, City of Courtenay

Mainland / Southwest

- **Christina Anthony**, Portfolio Manager, Odlum Brown Limited and President/Founder of Forum for Women Entrepreneurs of BC
- **Kathy Barnett,** President & Publisher, Pique Publishing Inc.
- **John Cameron,** President & Founder, Momentum Energy Inc.
- **Garnet Etsell,** President, Coligny Hill Farms Ltd., Spring Meadow Farms Ltd. and Chief Financial Officer, Friesen Group of Companies
- **Kevin Evans**, Vice President, Western Canada, Retail Council of Canada
- **Laura Jones**, Vice President, BC & Yukon Canadian Federation of Independent Business
- **Tony Singh,** President, Fruiticana
- **Ian Tostenson,** President/CEO, British Columbia Restaurant Association
- **M.J. Whitemarsh,** CEO, Canadian Home Builders' Association of BC
- **John R. Winter,** President and CEO, British Columbia Chamber of Commerce
- **Naomi Yamamoto,** BC Chamber of Commerce and Owner/Operator, Tora Design Group and Lasercolour Business Graphics and Props

Thompson / Okanagan

- **Manse Binkley**, General Manager & Owner, Harmony Honda
- **Jackie Chaytor,** President, Tim Horton Franchises, Kamloops
- **Neal Davies,** Vice President & General Manager, Cantex Group of Companies
- **Linda Larson**, Former Mayor of Oliver
- **Robert Louie,** Chairman, First Nations Lands Advisory Board and Chief, Westbank First Nation

Kootenay

- **Bruce A. Hryciuk,** Senior Partner, Hryciuk Gallinger & Co., Inc.

Cariboo

- **Mark Nairn,** Owner, Bar M7 Ranch and President, BC Cattlemen's Association; and Owner/President of Beamac Installations Ltd.
- **Bruce Sutherland,** Owner / President of WolfTEK Industries Inc.

Nechako

- **Barrie Carter,** President, Carters Jewellers Ltd.

Northeast

- **Lita Powell,** President, Li-Car Management Group

Appendix B — Small Business Roundtable Milestones

April 2005	Premier Gordon Campbell announces Five Great Goals
October 2005	Minister Thorpe appoints the Permanent Small Business Roundtable
November 2005	Inaugural Small Business Roundtable Board Meeting: Kelowna (Kick-off meeting to discuss Small Business Roundtable mandate, objectives, and activities)
November 2005	First Small Business Roundtable Consultation: Prince George
November 2005 to April 2006	Total of 18 consultations held around the province to April 2006
February 2006	Small Business Roundtable Board Meeting: Vancouver (Provide update on consultations and survey)
April 2006	Small Business Roundtable Consultation: Burnaby (Final 2005/06 consultation)
May 2006	Small Business Roundtable Meeting: Penticton (Discuss consultation findings, potential strategies and framework for recommendations to be incorporated in Small Business Roundtable Report to Government)
September 2006	Small Business Roundtable Meeting: Cranbrook (Review and approval of Roundtable Report to Government)
October 2006	Submit Small Business Roundtable Report to Government

Appendix C — Small Business Roundtable Consultation Process

The Roundtable consultations were aimed at engaging small business owners and operators and industry representatives throughout British Columbia in a conversation to identify opportunities and issues concerning small business.

Consultation Participants

Roundtable consultation participants were nominated by local business organizations and associations, Roundtable members and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), as well inviting public participation through local media outlets and newspaper advertisements. In all, 228 participants from 18 communities throughout the province participated in the Roundtable consultations. Participants included representatives from a wide range of sectors including agriculture, construction, retail and hospitality.

Consultation Locations

The Roundtable conducted consultations from November 2005 to April 2006. Locations were chosen to represent each region in British Columbia to obtain a variety of viewpoints on small business. The following table indicates the communities visited in each region and the number of participants.

CONSULATION PARTICIPATION BY REGION

Region	Consultation Location	# of Participants
Thompson/Okanagan	Kelowna, Penticton, Kamloops	40
Cariboo/Chilcotin	Prince George, Williams Lake, Quesnel	37
Northern BC (including Nechako)	Smithers, Fort St. John, Dawson Creek	31
Kootenay/Rockies	Cranbrook	14
Vancouver Island	Nanaimo, Courtenay	27
Lower Mainland	Abbotsford, Richmond, Burnaby, Surrey	52
Victoria and Vancouver		27

Consultation Format

Each consultation was chaired by Minister Thorpe with at least one member of the Small Business Roundtable; in most cases, the local MLA also participated. Consultations were approximately two hours in length and involved discussions on the following five questions:

1. What is working well for small business in British Columbia?
2. What are the key opportunities you see for small businesses in British Columbia in general?
3. What are the key challenges you have personally encountered as a small business owner?
4. What changes could be made to continue to improve the environment your business operates in?
5. If there was one thing you could change to enhance small business competitiveness in British Columbia what would it be?

In addition to the discussion, some participants provided a written submission detailing or expanding on specific small business opportunities and issues. The Small Business Secretariat staff summarized opportunities and issues raised at each meeting and these summaries were posted on the Roundtable website (www.smallbusinessroundtable.ca).

Appendix D — Small Business Roundtable Consultation Results By Region

The following lists topics raised in each city visited within a specific region. The number beside the issue denotes how many times the issue was raised province wide.

Thompson / Okanagan

(Kelowna, Penticton and Kamloops)

- Recruitment and retention of skilled labour (18)
- Complexity of multiple levels of government and related regulatory requirements and taxes (18)
- Simplify and better communicate PST rules (17)
- Promote small business and trades in high schools (17)
- Promote British Columbia as a place to visit and live; encourage growth in tourism (15)
- Access to financing (15)
- Continue government regulatory reform (deregulation) (14)
- Access to high-speed Internet (12)
- Property Assessment impacts on small business (11)
- Provide business education to small business operators (10)
- Availability of labour given low unemployment rates (9)

Northern British Columbia

(Smithers, Fort St. John and Dawson Creek)

- Recruitment and retention of skilled labour (18)
- Complexity of multiple levels of government and related regulatory requirements and taxes (18)
- Simplify and better communicate PST rules (17)
- Promote small business and trades in high schools (17)
- Promote British Columbia as a place to visit and live; encourage growth in tourism (15)
- Access to financing (15)
- Continue government regulatory reform (deregulation) (14)
- Promote benefits of immigrant skilled workers (13)
- Access to high-speed Internet (12)
- Encourage growth in the value-added sector (11)
- Access to financing (15)
- Increase Workers' Compensation Board regulations (7)
- Provide living allowances for people living in the North (3)

Cariboo / Chilcotin

(Prince George, Williams Lake and Quesnel)

- Recruitment and retention of skilled labour (18)
- Complexity of multiple levels of government and related regulatory requirements and taxes (18)
- Simplify and better communicate PST rules (17)
- Promote small business and trades in high schools (17)
- Promote British Columbia as a place to visit and live; encourage growth in tourism (15)
- Access to financing (15)
- Continue government regulatory reform (deregulation) (14)
- Promote benefits of immigrant skilled workers (13)
- Access to high-speed Internet (12)
- Encourage growth in the value-added sector (11)
- Business succession planning (10)

- Ensure British Columbia has a competitive tax structure (10)
- Provide better access to trades training (9)
- Access to Crown land (including Agricultural Land Reserve and for aggregate industry) (8)
- Recruitment and retention of skilled labour (8)
- Increasing WCB regulations (7)
- Allowing small business to sell goods and services to government (6)
- Ministry of Forests results-based regulations' impact on small business (4)

Vancouver Island

(Nanaimo and Courtenay)

- Recruitment and retention of skilled labour (18)
- Complexity of multiple levels of government and related regulatory requirements and taxes (18)
- Simplify and better communicate PST rules (17)
- Promote small business and trades in high schools (17)
- Access to financing (15)
- Promote British Columbia as a place to visit and live; encourage growth in tourism (15)
- Property Assessment impacts on small business (11)
- Communicate trades training as a viable alternative to a university education (10)
- Provide business education (10)
- Continue infrastructure projects (10)
- Business succession planning (10)
- Allowing small business to sell goods and services to government (6)

Kootenay-Rockies (Cranbrook)

As Cranbrook was the only community visited in the Kootenay Rockies region, many similar issues raised in other consultations were discussed; however, the following issues are generally unique to Cranbrook.

- Develop First Nations as a source of skilled labour (2)
- Promote education system to attract foreign students (2)
- Land use for commercial purposes being curtailed by outspoken environmental groups (1)
- Allowing trade tools to be expensed from taxes (1)

Lower Mainland

(Abbotsford, Richmond, Burnaby and Surrey)

- Recruitment and retention of skilled labour (18)
- Complexity of multiple levels of government and related regulatory requirements and taxes (18)
- Simplify and better communicate PST rules (17)
- Promote small business and trades in high schools (17)
- Promote British Columbia as a place to visit and live; encourage growth in tourism (15)
- Access to financing (15)
- Continue government regulatory reform (deregulation) (14)
- Promote benefits of immigrant skilled workers (13)
- Communicate trades training as a viable alternative to a university education (10)
- Reduce PST (9)
- Increase domestic and international consumer base (8)
- Inconsistent certification of trades and professionals among the provinces (7)
- Cost of crime and homelessness (5)
- Implementation of TransLink parking tax (4)
- Better government communication of small business problems and solutions (3)

Vancouver and Victoria

- Recruitment and retention of skilled labour (18)
- Complexity of multiple levels of government and related regulatory requirements and taxes (18)
- Simplify and better communicate PST rules (17)
- Promote small business and trades in high schools (17)
- Promote British Columbia as a place to visit and live; encourage growth in tourism (15)
- Access to financing (15)
- Continue government regulatory reform (deregulation) (14)
- Property Assessment impacts on small business (11)
- Access to high-speed Internet (12)
- Ensure British Columbia has a competitive tax structure (10)
- Increase domestic and international consumer base; export opportunities to small business; develop strategic alliances abroad (8)
- Centralized office to get information on government goods and services (7)
- Cost of crime and homelessness (5)
- Encourage growth in the high-technology industry (5)
- Access to quality labour in the high-technology field (3)

Appendix E — Small Business Survey Process

The Roundtable contracted a market research firm, Malatest and Associates Ltd., to conduct a survey of small business owners to identify perceptions small business owners have of the business climate in the province and identify small business opportunities and issues.

Survey questions were based in part on the common themes identified by Roundtable sessions across the province. The survey was distributed in an online version to Roundtable members' affiliated organizations and associations as well as other business organizations not directly represented on the Roundtable. The survey was also made available to the general public from the Roundtable website.

To ensure statistical validity, Malatest conducted telephone surveys on a random selection of small business owners. In all, 493 small business operators participated in the online survey and fax, and 611 participated by telephone. The following tables indicate the percentage of participants by region and sector.

Small Business Survey Participation by Region

Region	# of Participants	Percentage of Survey	Provincial Percentage
Vancouver/Lower Mainland	505	48%	61%
Victoria/Capital Region	67	6%	8%
Rest of Vancouver Island	131	12%	8%
Thompson-Okanagan	182	16%	12%
Kootenay-Rockies	86	8%	4%
Cariboo-Chilcotin	38	4%	4%
Northern British Columbia	92	8%	4%
TOTAL:	**1,101**	**100%**	**100%**

Small Business Survey Participation by Sector

Major sector	# of Respondents	% of Total	Estimated BC Total
Primary	50	5%	5%
Transportation and Utilities	30	3%	5%
Manufacturing	53	5%	5%
Construction	101	9%	11%
Wholesale/Retail Trade	234	21%	18%
Finance, Information, Management, Admin.	75	7%	8%
Education, Health & Social Services/Arts	79	7%	10%
Accommodation and Food	92	8%	7%
Business Services/Tourism	168	15%	18%

Appendix F — Small Business Survey Results by Region

Survey participants were fairly consistent in identifying major opportunities, although as shown in the following table, there were regional differences in priorities. Promotion of skills and trades training to youths is identified as a key area on which government should focus. Small business owners identified computer or Internet training, accounting/bookkeeping, sales and marketing, and general business training as their priority areas for training. Providing tax credits for investment and training was also identified as an important opportunity for government to promote trades training. The table below provides the ranking of the opportunity for each region.

Survey Results – Key Opportunities by Region

Region	Promote skills & trades training to youths	Incentives to provide training	Enhance tax credits for investment and training
Vancouver and Lower Mainland	1	2	3
Victoria -Capital Region	2	1	3
Rest of Vancouver Island	1	2	3
Thompson-Okanagan	1	2	3
Kootenay-Rockies	1	2	3
Cariboo-Chilcotin	1	3	2
Northern British Columbia	1	2	3

Participants were asked their opinion on a variety of issues concerning small business in British Columbia. The overall tax burden, finding skilled labour, securing financing and keeping up with regulations and paperwork were the most common issues raised. However, as the table below indicates, there are regional differences in terms of priorities. The table below provides the ranking of the issue for each region.

Survey Results – Key Issues by Region

Region	Overall tax burden	Finding skilled labour	Securing Financing	Keeping up with Regulations and paperwork
Vancouver and Lower Mainland	1	2		3
Victoria -Capital Region	1	3		2
Rest of Vancouver Island	1	2		3
Thompson-Okanagan	2	1		3
Kootenay-Rockies	1	2	3	
Cariboo-Chilcotin	3	1		2
Northern British Columbia	2	1		3

Appendix G — Small Business Lens

Title of legislation, regulation, policy, or process change:

_____

Purpose of proposal: _____

If the answer is "NO" for any of the criteria, please attach explanation.

Regulatory Criteria	Criteria Met
1. Needed Requirement	
• Has the public policy been defined?	☐ YES ☐ NO
• Has the scope of the public policy problem been assessed?	☐ YES ☐ NO
• Is government intervention necessary to address the problem?	☐ YES ☐ NO
• Can a flexible policy be designed to fit different circumstances?	☐ YES ☐ NO
• Is there a way compliance can be voluntary?	☐ YES ☐ NO
2. Cost-benefit Analysis	
• Is the benefit to government or stakeholders worth the increased cost to business and those who must comply?	☐ YES ☐ NO
• Have the impacts on business of the requirement been analyzed?	☐ YES ☐ NO
3. Competitive Analysis	
• Has the impact of the requirement on British Columbia's economic competitiveness been assessed?	☐ YES ☐ NO
• Have the requirements been compared with other relevant jurisdictions?	☐ YES ☐ NO
4. Streamlined design (avoids or eliminates duplication)	
• Do the requirements avoid or eliminate duplication or overlap with federal or local government, or other ministries?	☐ YES ☐ NO
• Can they be streamlined, synchronized, harmonized or incorporated into other legislation/regulation/policy/process?	☐ YES ☐ NO
• Has a process map been developed to support streamlining?	☐ YES ☐ NO
5. Replacement Principle	
• If this change is being added, can something be taken away?	☐ YES ☐ NO
6. Results based design	
• Does the proposed design reflect government's commitment to regulatory	☐ YES ☐ NO

requirements that are results-based and use scientific evidence?	☐ YES	☐ NO
• Have market incentives been considered to achieve compliance and requirement objectives?	☐ YES	☐ NO
7. Transparent Development		
• Has real consultation occurred with business during the development of the requirements? If yes, who and how?	☐ YES	☐ NO
• Has business had the opportunity to see and comment on the proposed requirements?	☐ YES	☐ NO
8. Time and cost of compliance		
• Will it take a lot of time for a business person to comply with the new requirements?	☐ YES	☐ NO
• Will it cost them in resources to comply with this? (e.g. staff, accountant, lawyer, self)	☐ YES	☐ NO
• Is additional paperwork for business required (costing time and money)? If yes, can this be incorporated into or streamlined with existing paperwork?	☐ YES	☐ NO
• Is training required for a business to comply and implement? Is the training equally accessible to the rural areas of the province and for persons who do not have access to high speed internet?	☐ YES	☐ NO
• Have government service standards been set (e.g. response or turnaround time)?	☐ YES	☐ NO
• Have steps been considered to ensure those who administer the requirements respond in a timely way to those who are affected by the requirements?	☐ YES	☐ NO
9. Plain Language		
• Has the requirement been drafted in plain language?	☐ YES	☐ NO
10. Simple communications		
• Will this change be communicated?	☐ YES	☐ NO
• Can it be said in less than 1 page?	☐ YES	☐ NO
• Can it be added to existing small business information sources such as Small Business BC website?	☐ YES	☐ NO
11. Sunset review / expiry principle		
• Has a date been established to review the requirements or for them to expire?	☐ YES	☐ NO

Number of Regulatory Requirements to be added:	
Number of Regulatory Requirements to be eliminated:	
NET CHANGE:	

_____ _____

Head of Regulatory Authority Date

Ministry/Municipal Department: _____

Appendix H — Current Government Initiatives

The Roundtable was pleased to see several of these opportunities and issues addressed in the 2006 Budget, including:

- Committing $50 million over three years to double tourism and increase British Columbia's international exposure.
- Providing $90 million for a new tax credit program, to be designed in consultation with industry, to expand training opportunities in the traditional construction trades and emerging industries.
- Providing $39 million for the Industry Training Authority to increase apprenticeship training through public and private training institutions.
- Eliminating PST on labour charges for maintaining or modifying computer software.
- Expanding and clarifying PST exemptions for machinery and equipment.
- Increasing the vehicle PST surtax threshold for passenger vehicles to $55,000 from $49,000, allowing British Columbians who require diesel pickup trucks and similar vehicles for work to purchase them without paying the surtax.
- Increasing the Small Business Venture Capital tax credit program to $25 million from $20 million.
- Working with the private sector as part of the Transportation Investment Plan to invest $3.9 billion over the next three years on infrastructure projects throughout the province.

In addition to establishing the Roundtable, the Government of British Columbia established in 2005 the Competition Council. The Competition Council was tasked to assess the overall competitiveness of the province, identify barriers to economic growth and recommended solutions to industry and government. The Competition Council released its findings in June 2006. Although the Council focused on big business industry sectors, many cross-sector issues identified were similar to those heard by the Roundtable.

GLOSSARY

ACE IT (Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training)
www.itabc.ca/ICC-ACEIT.php

Established by the Industry Training Authority and the Ministry of Education, ACE IT is a program that allows British Columbian youths to take courses that provide credit towards high school graduation or completion of an apprenticeship or Industry Training Program. The post-secondary credits earned through the ACE IT are equivalent to the first level of apprenticeship technical training.

British Columbia's Provincial Nominee Program
www.ecdev.gov.bc.ca/ProgramsAndServices/PNP/index.htm

The British Columbia Provincial Nominee Program (BC PNP) is an immigration program designed to accelerate the process for successful applicants to obtain permanent resident status in Canada. The BC PNP can be used by an employer to recruit and/or retain an international worker with specialized skills for a position the employer has been unable to fill with a permanent resident. The BC PNP provides expedited immigration processing, in partnership with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, for internationally trained workers. This expedited processing allows the individual to land in approximately six months rather than the regular 18-24 months it may take if applying directly to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

BizPaL

BizPaL is an internet-based tool designed to help individuals start a business in British Columbia. Through the BizPaL website, federal, provincial, and municipal licensing and permit information necessary for establishing a business in particular locations in the province can be accessed from a single centralized location. For example, a person thinking of operating a bed and breakfast establishment in Kamloops can now access BizPaL to obtain information on all of the licensing and permits required to start the business in that location. BizPaL is an effective tool that reduces the time and frustration that would otherwise be spent identifying the permits and licenses that are needed, and in what order they are needed, to start a business. Work is underway to expand BizPal to numerous locations throughout the province.

Citizen-Centred Regulatory Reform
www.regulatoryreform.gov.bc.ca/

Citizen-Centred Regulatory Reform is a continuation of the Government of British Columbia's Regulatory Reform Initiative. The Regulatory Reform Initiative has achieved a 41.06 percent regulatory reduction – totalling 156,891 requirements. Citizen-Centred Regulatory Reform builds on this momentum by focusing regulatory reform projects across government on saving time from the perspective of citizens, business and industry, whether they are accessing government services and programs or complying with government requirements. The objective of Citizen-Centred Regulatory Reform is to ensure that citizens, small businesses and industry spend less time dealing with government and more time on what's really important, making their businesses successful.

FrontCounter BC
www.frontcounterbc.gov.bc.ca/

With offices across the province, FrontCounter BC provides a single window service for clients of provincial natural resource ministries and agencies. Natural resource clients obtain all the information and authorizations they need to start or expand a business. Clients can interact face to face with staff specifically trained and knowledgeable in authorizations required by natural resource businesses and clients for mining, forestry, agriculture, etc. FrontCounter BC services include: guiding clients through required authorizations; helping clients complete strong application packages; interpreting land information, maps, management plans; following-up and track the status of applications filed; liaising between ministries, agencies, and governments; beginning referral processes with First Nations; helping to identify and market economic development opportunities; and working together to provide better service to British Columbians.

Industry Canada
canadabusiness.gc.ca/gol/cbec/site.nsf/en/index.html

Industry Canada provides several services for small business. These business services include: Starting up a Business, Human Resources, Financing, Exporting, Importing, Taxes, Research and Statistics, Government Contracts and Tenders, Innovation, and information on Regulations.

Industry Training Authority
www.itabc.ca

Established in 2004, the Industry Training Authority (ITA) is a provincial government agency with legislated responsibility to govern and develop the industry training system in British Columbia. ITA works with industry, people who are pursuing training, and training providers to develop an approach that will effectively meet industry training needs, now and in the future. The goal of ITA is to improve approaches to skills training that will position B.C. for economic success, and provide opportunities to individual British Columbians. The ITA also works with stakeholders to ensure there is a clear focus on industry and labour market needs.

Junior Achievement BC (JABC)
www.jabc.org

Junior Achievement of British Columbia (JABC) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to help our youth gain a better understanding and exposure to the practical side of business and economics. Through professionally developed programs delivered by qualified volunteers, JABC encourages young people to discover more about business and how it affects their future, regardless of what career path they choose to pursue. Junior Achievement focuses on students from grade 5-12 and provides programs to equip them with an understanding of the basics elements of a business; the fundamentals behind good financial decisions; the relationship between education and personal and professional goals; the risks and rewards of entrepreneurship; and, the economic theory behind management decisions.

The OneStop Business Registry
www.bcbusinessregistry.ca/introduction/index.htm

The OneStop Business Registry is a web-based registration system that allows prospective and current business owners to register their businesses or change their business address in a convenient way. OneStop assigns a unique business number to the business and allows the information to be used when dealing with two or more related public sector agencies. OneStop makes working with the public sector simpler, easier, and more convenient for the entrepreneur.

Small Business BC
www.smallbusinessbc.ca

Small Business BC, a public and private sector collaboration, is the comprehensive Business Development Resource for people exploring opportunities, launching new ventures and growing existing businesses. By involving the business community directly in its operations, Small Business BC enables the development of private sector partnerships to complement and expand future services. It is the key resource centre for small business information and services in the province, including business registration, seminars, planning and advisory services. Small Business BC's vision is to drive, motivate and inspire entrepreneurial growth and success in small businesses throughout British Columbia.

Taxpayer Fairness and Service Code
www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/fairness/

The Taxpayer Fairness and Service Code (the Code) is a set of guidelines that outlines the public's rights in dealing with the Ministry of Small Business and Revenue and its staff. The Code outlines the standards and behaviour the public can expect from ministry staff and allows the Ministry to provide the best possible quality customer service to its clients. The purpose of this code is to encourage more open communication with British Columbians. Good communication is important to both the ministry and its clients to identify problems early, find solutions sooner and, most importantly, prevent problems before they occur.

2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games Commerce Centre
www.2010commercecentre.gov.bc.ca

The 2010 BC Commerce Centre is a central website that allows interested individuals to identify business opportunities available from the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. Through the site, individuals can: browse or search business opportunities; sign-up for e-mail notification or current bids; download the 2010 Business Guide; register to receive a copy of the 2010 Newsletter; review past opportunities and bid results; and download guides that could help in preparing a successful bid for an Olympic 2010 business opportunity.